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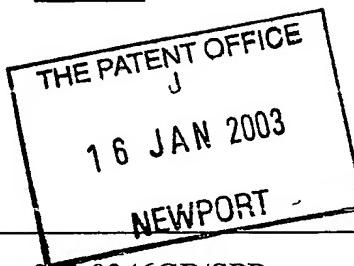
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The
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**Statement of inventorship and of
right to grant of a patent**



The Patent Office
Cardiff Road
Newport
Gwent NP10 8QQ

1. Your reference

202-0346GB/SPP

16 JAN 2003

2. Patent application number

0300975.0

3. Full name of the or of each applicant.

Ford Global Technologies, Inc.

4. Title of the invention

Adaptive Cruise Control Systems

5. State how the applicant(s) derived the right from
the inventor(s) to be granted a patent

By virtue of agreements giving rights to inventions made by the employer
of the inventor(s)

6. How many, if any, additional Patents Forms
7/77 are attached to this form?

7.

I/we believe that the person(s) named over the page (*and on any extra copies of
this form*) is/are the inventor(s) of the invention which the above patent
application relates to.

Signature

Date

10 January 2003

S P Potts

Agent

8. Name and daytime telephone number of
person to contact in the United Kingdom.

S P Potts

01926 482150

Patents Form 7/77

Enter the full names, addresses and postcodes of the inventors in the boxes and underline the surnames

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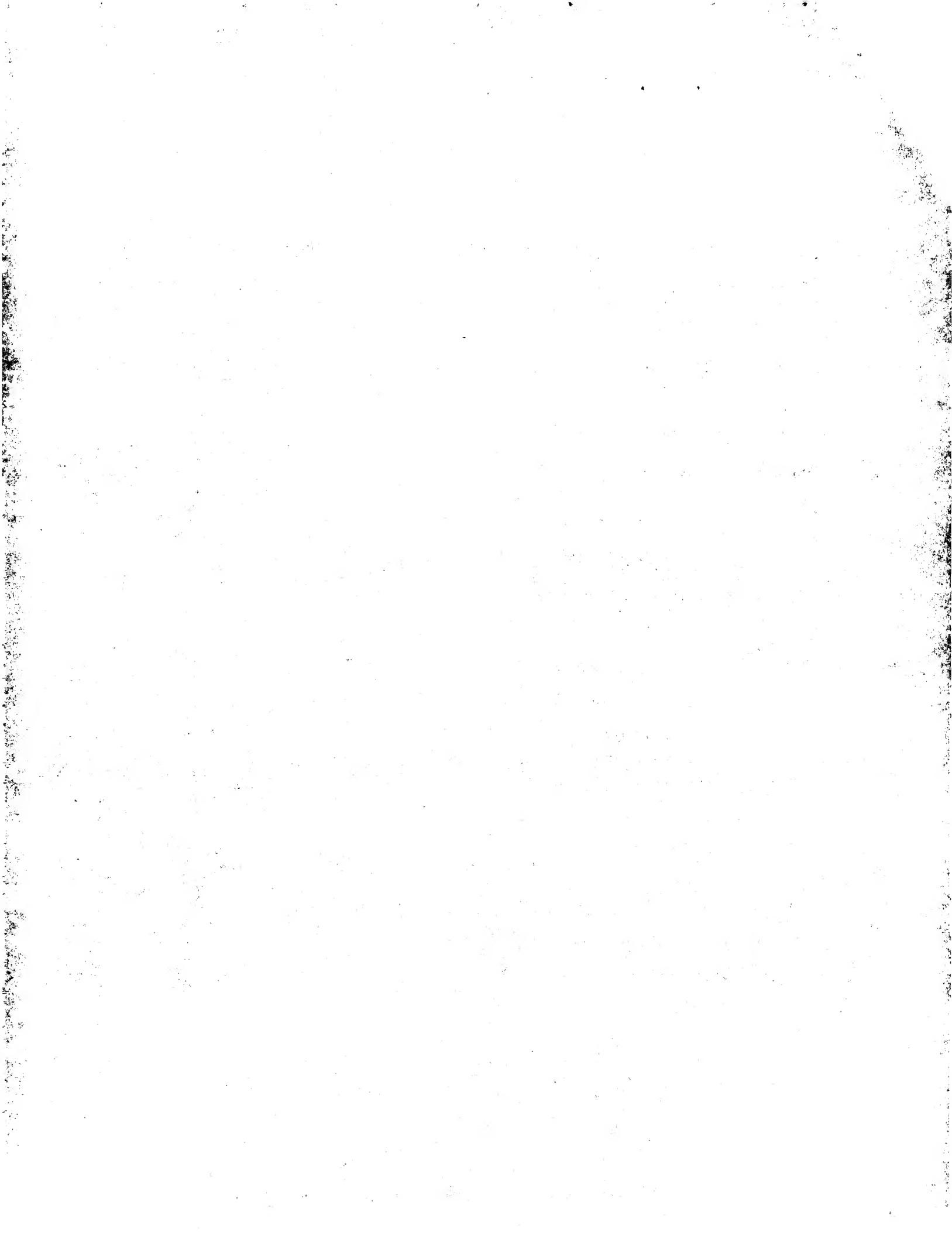
GB 0300975.0

By virtue of a direction given under Section 30 of the Patents Act 1977, the application is proceeding in the name of

FORD GLOBAL TECHNOLOGIES LLC,
Suite 600 Parklane Towers East,
One Parklane Boulevard,
Dearborn,
Michigan 48126-2490,
United States of America

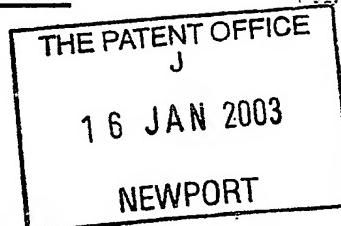
Incorporated in USA - Delaware,

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16JAN03 E777518-1 D01520
P01/7700 0.00-0300975.0



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Request for grant of a patent

1. Your reference

202-0346GB/SPP

16 JAN 2003

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3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant.

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Patents ADP number

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4. Title of the invention

Adaptive Cruise Control Systems

5. Name of your agent

S P Potts et al

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent.

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PAT DEPT 53616/4
BANSBURY RD, LIGHTHORN
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7460002001

Patents ADP Number

GLOBAL ABS 7.10.1

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or each of these earlier applications and the or each application number.

Country

Priority application number

Date of filing

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

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8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request.

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Patents Form 1/77

9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form.
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Continuation sheets of this form

| | |
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| Description | 4 |
| Claim(s) | 2 |
| Abstract | 1 |
| Drawing(s) | 2 |

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (*Patents Form 7/77*)

Request for preliminary examination and search (*Patents Form 9/77*)

Request for substantive examination
(*Patents Form 10/77*)

Any other documents
(please specify)

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date

10 January 2003

S P Potts

Agent

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom.

S P Potts

01926 482150

Adaptive Cruise Control Systems

The present invention relates to adaptive cruise control systems for motor vehicles.

Conventional cruise control systems fulfil the function of speed control of a vehicle. A desired speed is set by the driver and a control system operates on the engine (usually the throttle only) to maintain the desired speed. When the traffic is light, this simple speed 5 control is acceptable to the driver, however if the traffic is heavy the driver is faced with constantly adjusting the set speed in order to maintain a safe distance from the preceding traffic and may have to disengage the cruise control in order to brake.

Many systems have now been developed by the addition of a distance sensor to the conventional cruise control system which adds distance keeping to the basic speed control 10 function. Many such systems also include means to monitor the relative velocities of the vehicle which is equipped with the cruise control system and a preceding vehicle. Moreover the engine control also often includes a limited authority braking system, so that the speed control / distance keeping can be effected by a combination of the throttle and the brake.

Such a system may operate as an adaptive cruise control system which, when activated, enables the vehicle in question (host vehicle) to reduce speed automatically 15 when a preceding target vehicle is detected in its path. The host vehicle will then follow, no closer than a minimum set time gap (equivalent to a minimum set distance), the closest preceding target vehicle that is "in path". This will continue until the closest preceding 20 target vehicle is detected to move out of the path of the host vehicle at which point the original desired set speed is resumed. An example of this type of system is disclosed in US 5,910,565.

Dynamically the adaptive cruise control vehicle can be in one of two states, either "cruise" acting like conventional cruise control and controlling the vehicle to a desired driver

set speed, or it is in "follow" mode where the speed of the vehicle is reduced below the set speed because a preceding target vehicle is within a set range.

A further refinement is the provision of a stop / go facility whereby the host vehicle may be brought to a standstill, behind a queue of vehicles for example. See for example

5 US 6,233,515.

Current adaptive cruise control systems can be overridden whilst the vehicle is progressing in either or cruise or follow mode, by the driver pressing the throttle pedal. Once the vehicle has been brought to a halt automatically under the control of the adaptive cruise control system, pressing the throttle pedal to start off again will override the system.

10 Thus there is a need for a mechanism for allowing the driver to re-engage adaptive cruise control after the vehicle has been automatically brought to a halt.

According to a first aspect of the present invention an adaptive cruise control device for a vehicle includes means for re-engaging an automatic cruise control function after the vehicle has been brought to a halt, said means for re-engaging being adapted to respond

15 to a momentary press and release of the vehicle's throttle pedal.

According to a second aspect of the present invention a method for re-engaging an adaptive cruise control function in a vehicle after the vehicle has been brought to a halt includes the steps of; detecting a momentary press and release of the vehicle's throttle pedal and re-engaging the adaptive cruise control function in response thereto.

20 In a preferred embodiment, the means for re-engaging is further adapted to be responsive to the output of a distance sensor for measuring the distance between said vehicle and a preceding vehicle.

The distance sensor may comprise a radar, infra red, ultra sonic sensor or the like and be mounted on the vehicle. The re-engagement may be inhibited if the preceding vehicle is deemed to be within a certain range, thus providing an additional safety feature.

If the preceding vehicle is detected to be within a range threshold, the driver may be 5 alerted by the provision of a warning device. Such a device may be configured to produce an audible warning or to illuminate a warning light for example.

In a further embodiment, the means for re-engaging is further responsive to an input from a manually-operated switch which allows the driver to reactivate the adaptive cruise control function.

10 Some embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the drawings of which;

Figure 1 is a block diagram showing an adaptive cruise control device in accordance with the invention and its incorporation with conventional vehicle systems, and

15 Figure 2 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of preferred embodiments of the invention.

In Figure 1, a re-engagement controller 1 receives inputs from a radar sensor 2, a throttle position sensor 3 and a resume button 4. A first output 5 of the re-engagement controller 1 is fed to an adaptive cruise controller 6 and a second output to an audible 20 warning device 7. The radar sensor 2 and throttle position sensor 3 are conventional devices and the radar sensor 2 may form a part of the vehicle's conventional adaptive cruise controller as may the adaptive cruise controller 6. All the modules illustrated are mounted within a vehicle (not shown) and the resume button 4 is driver-operated.

With reference also to figure 2, at step 8 the vehicle is automatically brought to a halt by the adaptive cruise controller 6. When the driver wishes to set off again and re-engage adaptive cruise control he / she briefly presses the throttle pedal to signal to the re-engagement controller 1 that he / she wishes to proceed (step 9). This action is detected 5 by the re-engagement controller 1 via its input from the throttle position sensor 3. However, before the re-engagement controller 1 sends a resume signal to the adaptive cruise controller 6, it firsts interrogates the radar sensor 2 to ascertain whether the distance between the vehicle and any other vehicle that may be in front is greater than a pre-set (safe) threshold of typically 3 metres (step 10). If the measured distance is greater than the 10 threshold, then the re-engagement controller 1 instructs the adaptive cruise controller 6 to resume adaptive cruise control operation (step 11). The vehicle then accelerates to either a follow speed or set speed at appropriate. If, on the other hand, the separation between the vehicle and one in front is equal to less than the threshold, then an audible warning is sounded (step 12) and the re-engagement controller 1 does not send an instruction to the 15 adaptive cruise controller 6 to resume operation. Instead, the adaptive cruise control operation is deactivated on instruction from the re-engagement controller 1 to the adaptive cruise controller 6 (step 13).

In a further embodiment, the driver has the additional option of pressing the resume button 4 (step14) to re-engage the adaptive cruise control operation. Once again, the 20 method is configured to resume adaptive cruise control operation when the distance from the vehicle and any preceding vehicle exceeds the preset threshold. If however, the distance between the vehicle and another vehicle infront is equal to or less than the safe threshold, then the adaptive cruise controller 6 holds the vehicle's brakes on and the audible alarm is sounded. The vehicle can now only be caused to move off again by the 25 driver overriding the system, e.g. by depressing the throttle pedal.

CLAIMS

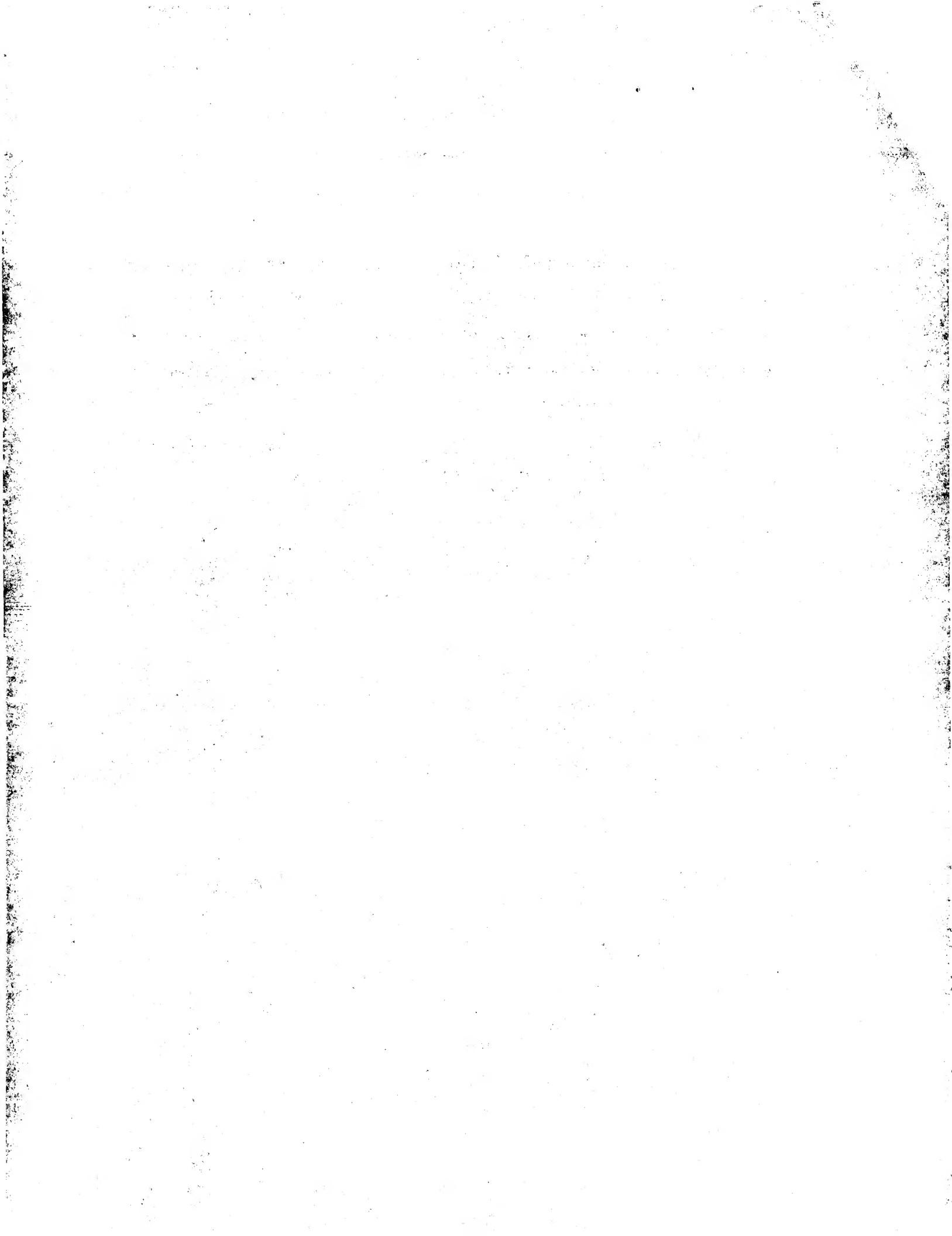
1. An adaptive cruise control device for a vehicle including means for re-engaging an adaptive cruise control function after the vehicle has been brought to a halt, said means for re-engaging being adapted to respond to a momentary press and release of the vehicle's throttle pedal.
2. An adaptive cruise control device for a vehicle as claimed in claim 1 in which said means for re-engaging is further adapted to be responsive to the output of a distance sensor for measuring the distance between said vehicle and a preceding vehicle.
3. An adaptive cruise control device for a vehicle as claimed in claim 2 and further including a warning device for alerting the driver of said vehicle of the proximity of the preceding vehicle.
4. An adaptive cruise control system as claimed in any preceding claim in which the means for re-engaging is responsive to an input from a manually operated switch.
5. A vehicle including the adaptive cruise control device of any preceding claim.
6. A method for re-engaging an adaptive cruise control function in a vehicle after the vehicle has been brought to a halt, the method including the steps of; detecting a momentary press and release of the vehicle's throttle pedal and re-engaging the adaptive cruise control function in response thereto.
7. A method for re-engaging an adaptive cruise control function as claimed in claim 6 including the further step of monitoring the distance between the vehicle and a preceding vehicle and re-engaging the adaptive cruise control function only if the distance exceeds a preset threshold.

8. A method for re-engaging an adaptive cruise control function as claimed in claim 7 including the further step of issuing a warning to the driver of the vehicle if the distance is equal to or less than the pre-set threshold.
9. An adaptive cruise control system for a vehicle substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the drawings.

ABSTRACT

Adaptive Cruise Control System

An adaptive cruise control device (1) provides a mechanism for re-engaging adaptive cruise control after a vehicle has been brought to a halt automatically. A "blip" on the throttle pedal when the driver wants to proceed is detected by a throttle position sensor (3) 5 and in response, the device (1) instructs the adaptive cruise control system to re-engage. A safety feature inhibits re-engagement if the gap between the vehicle and one in front is below a preset range.



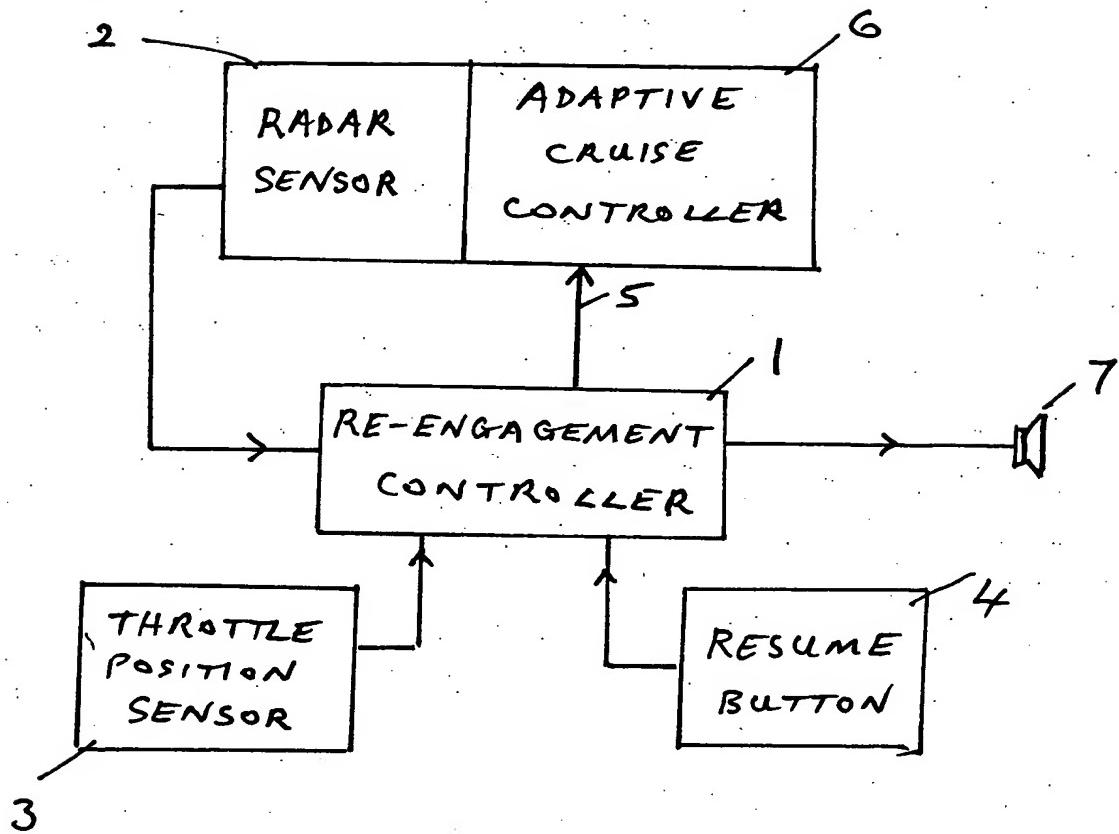


FIG. 1

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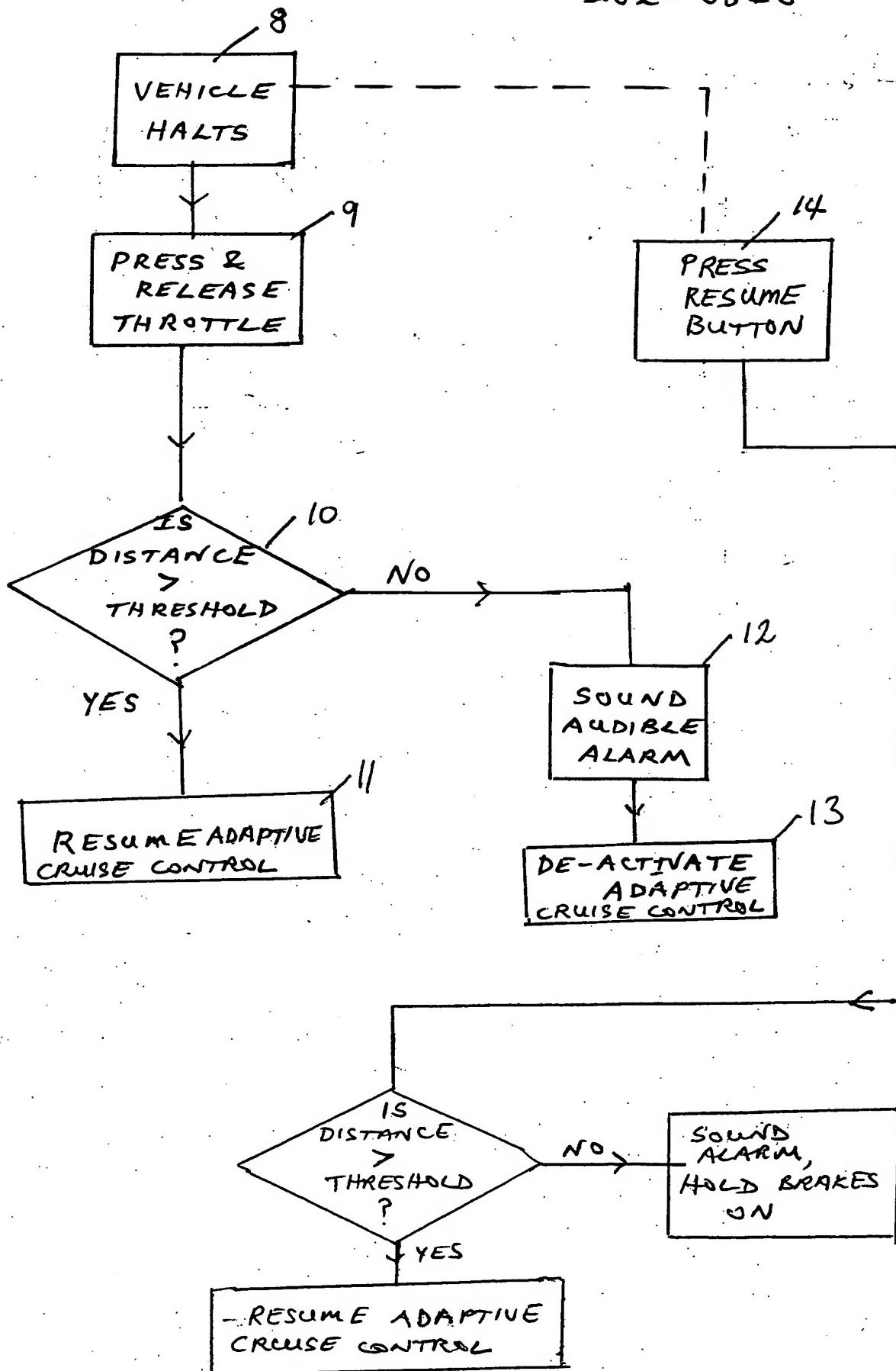


FIG 2.

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